



**STATE OF WISCONSIN**  
**Division of Hearings and Appeals**

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In the Matter of

Milwaukee County Department of Human Services, Petitioner

vs.

DECISION

██████████ Respondent

Case #: FOF - 173342

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Pursuant to petition filed April 1, 2016, under Wis. Admin. Code §HA 3.03, and 7 C.F.R. § 273.16, to review a decision by the Milwaukee County Department of Human Services to disqualify ██████████ from receiving FoodShare benefits (FS) for a period of one year, a hearing was held on Monday, May 16, 2016 at 09:15 AM, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The issue for determination is whether the respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV).

There appeared at that time the following persons:

**PARTIES IN INTEREST:**

Petitioner:

Department of Health Services  
1 West Wilson Street, Room 651  
Madison, WI 53703

By: ██████████  
Milwaukee Enrollment Services  
1220 W. Vliet Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53205

Respondent:

██████████  
██████████  
████████████████████

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:**

Debra Bursinger  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The respondent (CARES # [REDACTED]) is a resident of Milwaukee County who received FS benefits in Milwaukee County from April 24, 2012 through January 1, 2016.
2. Due to the respondent's enrollment in the FS program, the respondent was issued a QUEST card which the respondent utilized to access his monthly FS allotment provided to respondent. QUEST cards are electronic benefit transfer cards that replaced food stamp coupon booklets.
3. Respondent is disabled from a stroke and has difficulty with reading. In 2012, respondent employed a woman who purchased groceries for him due to his inability to walk at that time. He did not request the woman to be his authorized representative for FS benefits.
4. On July 14, 2012, FS benefits of \$89 were issued to the respondent's QUEST card. On August 14, 2012, FS benefits of \$166 were issued to the respondent's QUEST card.
5. On July 14, 2012 and August 14, 2012, the respondent's QUEST card was utilized in transactions involving [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) in the amount of \$89 and \$100 respectively.
6. [REDACTED] was a licensed vendor of the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, which enabled it to redeem QUEST cards.
7. [REDACTED] was classified as a mobile vendor and operated out of private vehicles. Between August, 2010 and January, 2013, [REDACTED] redeemed approximately \$778,000 in QUEST benefits from food stamp benefit recipients who were not purchasing food, but instead receiving cash for providing access to their QUEST benefits.
8. On or about February 15, 2013, [REDACTED], doing business as [REDACTED], pled guilty to a charge of unlawfully purchasing and redeeming FS benefits. [REDACTED] admitted that no food or groceries were ever provided by [REDACTED] and/or [REDACTED] in exchange for Quest benefits.
9. On April 14, 2016, the petitioner prepared an Administrative Disqualification Hearing Notice alleging that respondent intentionally transferred FS benefits to [REDACTED], in the total amount of \$189.00, in exchange for cash payment(s).

## **DISCUSSION**

An intentional program violation of the FoodShare program occurs when a recipient intentionally does the following:

1. makes a false or misleading statement, or misrepresents, conceals or withholds facts;  
or
2. commits any act that constitutes a violation of the Food Stamp Act, the Food Stamp Program Regulations, or any Wisconsin statute for the purpose of using, presenting, transferring, acquiring, receiving, possessing or trafficking of FoodShare benefits or QUEST cards.

*FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook*, § 3.14.1; *see also* 7 C.F.R. § 273.16(c) and Wis. Stat. §§ 946.92(2).

Wisconsin statutes prohibit the intentional exchange of FS benefits for cash. The law specifically provides that to traffic food stamp program benefits means to do any of the following:

Buy, sell, steal, or otherwise accomplish the exchange of, directly, indirectly, in collusion with others, or individually, food stamp program benefits issued and accessed through the electronic

benefit transfer program under s. [49.797](#), or by manual voucher and signature, for cash or other consideration that is not food.

Wis. Stat. §946.92(1)(dm); *see also*, 7 C.F.R. § 271.5(b).

An intentional program violation can be proven by a court order, a diversion agreement entered into with the local district attorney, a waiver of a right to a hearing, or an administrative disqualification hearing, *FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook*, § 3.14.1. The petitioner can disqualify only the individual found to have committed the intentional violation; it cannot disqualify the entire household. Those disqualified on grounds involving the improper transfer of FS benefits are ineligible to participate in the FoodShare program for one year for the first violation, two years for the second violation, and permanently for the third violation. Although other family members cannot be disqualified, their monthly allotments will be reduced unless they agree to make restitution within 30 days of the date that the FS program mails a written demand letter. 7 C.F.R. § 273.16(b).

In order for the petitioner to establish that an FS recipient has committed an IPV, it has the burden to prove two separate elements by clear and convincing evidence. The recipient must have: 1) committed; and 2) intended to commit a program violation per 7 C.F.R. § 273.16(e)(6). In *Kuehn v. Kuehn*, 11 Wis.2d 15 (1959), the court held that:

Defined in terms of quantity of proof, reasonable certitude or reasonable certainty in ordinary civil cases may be attained by or be based on a mere or fair preponderance of the evidence. Such certainty need not necessarily exclude the probability that the contrary conclusion may be true. In fraud cases it has been stated the preponderance of the evidence should be clear and satisfactory to indicate or sustain a greater degree of certitude. Such degree of certitude has also been defined as being produced by clear, satisfactory, and convincing evidence. Such evidence, however, need not eliminate a reasonable doubt that the alternative or opposite conclusion may be true. ...

*Kuehn*, 11 Wis.2d at 26.

*Wisconsin Jury Instruction – Civil 205* is also instructive. It provides:

Clear, satisfactory and convincing evidence is evidence which when weighed against that opposed to it clearly has more convincing power. It is evidence which satisfies and convinces you that “yes” should be the answer because of its greater weight and clear convincing power. “Reasonable certainty” means that you are persuaded based upon a rational consideration of the evidence. Absolute certainty is not required, but a guess is not enough to meet the burden of proof. This burden of proof is known as the “middle burden.” The evidence required to meet this burden of proof must be more convincing than merely the greater weight of the credible evidence but may be less than beyond a reasonable doubt.

Further, the *McCormick* treatise states that “it has been persuasively suggested that [the clear and convincing evidence standard of proof] could be more simply and intelligibly translated to the jury if they were instructed that they must be persuaded that the truth of the contention is highly probable.” 2 *McCormick on Evidence* § 340 (John W. Strong gen. ed., 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 1992).

Thus, in order to find that an IPV was committed, the trier of fact must derive from the evidence, a firm conviction as to the existence of each of the two elements even though there may exist a reasonable doubt that the opposite is true.

In order to prove the second element, i.e., intention, there must be clear and convincing evidence that the FS recipient intended to commit the IPV. The question of intent is generally one to be determined by the trier of fact. *State v. Lossman*, 118 Wis.2d 526 (1984). There is a general rule that a person is presumed to know and intend

the probable and natural consequences of his or her own voluntary words or acts. *See, John F. Jelke Co. v. Beck*, 208 Wis. 650 (1932); 31A C.J.S. Evidence §131. Intention is a subjective state of mind to be determined upon all the facts. *Lecus v. American Mut. Ins. Co. of Boston*, 81 Wis.2d 183 (1977). Thus, there must be clear and convincing evidence that the FS recipient knew that the act or omission was a violation of the FS Program but committed the violation anyway.

Based upon the record before me, I find that the petitioner has established by clear and convincing evidence that the respondent intentionally violated FS program rules, and that this violation was the first such violation committed by the respondent. The respondent testified credibly that, at the time of the [REDACTED] transactions on his card, he was disabled from a stroke. The case comments indicate that the respondent was receiving Social Security disability since at least April, 2012. The respondent testified that he was unable to read as a result of the stroke. He employed a woman to help him with household chores, including grocery shopping. He was unaware of the ability to name someone as an authorized representative on his FS card. He also did not understand the importance of not giving his card and PIN to another person. He testified that he recalled thinking that the woman did not come back with enough groceries but since he was unable to shop for himself, he did not notice that FS benefits were missing from his card. He is now able to walk again so he handles his FS card himself at this time.

I conclude that the evidence is not clear and convincing that the respondent intended to commit a program violation by trafficking his FS benefits with [REDACTED]. Therefore, the petitioner may not disqualify the respondent from the FS program for one year.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The evidence is not clear and convincing that the respondent intentionally violated FS program regulations.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, it is

**ORDERED**

That the petitioner's determination in IPV Case # [REDACTED] is hereby REVERSED, and the petitioner shall cease any enforcement action.

### **REQUEST FOR A REHEARING ON GROUNDS OF GOOD CAUSE FOR FAILURE TO APPEAR**

In instances where the good cause for failure to appear is based upon a showing of non-receipt of the hearing notice, the respondent has 30 days after the date of the written notice of the hearing decision to claim good cause for failure to appear. See 7 C.F.R. sec. 273.16(e)(4). Such a claim should be made in writing to the Division of Hearings and Appeals, P.O. Box 7875, Madison, WI 53707-7875.

### **APPEAL TO COURT**

You may also appeal this decision to Circuit Court in the county where you live. Appeals must be filed with the Court **and** served either personally or by certified mail on the Secretary of the Department of Health Services, 1 West Wilson Street, Room 651, Madison, WI 53703, **and** on those identified in this decision as "PARTIES IN INTEREST" **no more than 30 days after the date of this decision** or 30 days after a denial of a timely rehearing request (if you request one).

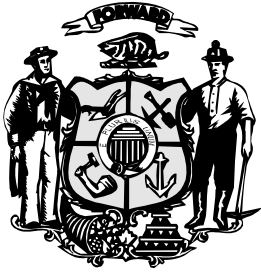
The process for Circuit Court Appeals may be found at Wis. Stat. §§ 227.52 and 227.53. A copy of the statutes may be found online or at your local library or courthouse.

Given under my hand at the City of Milwaukee,  
Wisconsin, this 15th day of June, 2016

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\sDebra Bursinger  
Administrative Law Judge  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

c: Miles - email  
Public Assistance Collection Unit - email  
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability - email  
[REDACTED] - email



## **State of Wisconsin\DIVISION OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS**

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The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on June 15, 2016.

Milwaukee Enrollment Services  
Public Assistance Collection Unit  
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability  
[REDACTED]@dhs.wisconsin.gov